TRAMPS IN THE WEST.

Their Number Is Increasing from Year to Year.

How the Modern Ishmaelites Spend Their Summer Vacation—Used for Political Purposes in Spring and Autumn—What Makes Vagabonds.

[Special Chicago Letter.]

"Why is Meandering Mike like flannel?" "Because he shrinks from washing." This threadbare little joke has been heard time and again, but no one can appreciate its deep significance until he has had the fortune—or misfortune, if you please—of visiting one of the numerous camps established by the tramp fraternity along the lines of our western railroads.

In winter the tramp establishes himself in the large cities of the land. He

THE KING OF TRAMPS.

pagne from a cut-glass goblet. A few weeks before election time the experienced tramp enjoys life. He is picked up by the agent of one or the other political party and enrolled as a guest at some cheap lodging house from which lives by begging, and sleeps wherever he can find a place. If mendicancy does not pay for his fusel oil and food, he steals or taps empty beer kegs in the rear of saloons. The stale remnants which find no escape through the barkeeper's faucet, even with the aid of a powerful pump, are poured by the dirty scavengers into the proverbial tomato can and consumed with the same relish displayed by the blase millionaire when he sips his French champ he can be registered. From the day of registration until he has cast his ballot for the "purification of municipal politics" he lives in clover. After that come neglect and the warm days of spring.

But instead of bemoaning his lot and abusing the erstwhile kind policeman who, after the election, degenerates once more into a petty tyrant, the man without a home takes up his stick and wanders out into the country, unless he can steal a ride on a freight train. Before he has traveled ten miles he will meet a number of his colleagues, and forthwith they will form a band, elect a leader and establish a camp.

Of course, not a tented camp, because tramps have never been known to carry baggage. The leader of the band simply selects some deserted barn or tenantless section house, and there he establishes his kingdom until driven away by the outraged farmers living within the purliens of his realm.

When men have learned to be philosophical, they do not require much to live. After a winter's campaign among the five and ten cent eating houses of a metropolitan city, a baked chicken, even though it be burned and full of pin feathers, is indeed a luxury, and a breakfast of fresh-laid eggs is enchanted into a Lucullian feast. Usually the depredatory habits of the vagabond are confined to the collection of such eatables, although once in awhile he will make an attack upon a freight car loaded with beer or other liquid re-

HARD TO BEAT.

freshment. Given these luxuries—and a few pieces of clothing which he secures by begging—the king of the road is a happy man—an up-to-date philosopher who believes that the world owes him a living, and who lives up to his conviction with a steadfastness worthy of a better principle.

Inasmuch as no body of tramps will invade the territory preempted by another detachment, the breaking up of camp is not a very serious matter. When given notice by the farmers to vacate they usually comply with the request promptly, only occasionally burning a barn or two to show their displeasure. If orders to quit are issued in the spring or early summer, the band moves ten or fifteen miles westward; if in late summer or fall, the progress is toward the east, provided Chicago has been the point of departure. In this way some companies travel through Illinois and Iowa, others through Wisconsin and Minnesota, always following the line of railroad selected as their own at the beginning of the season, and return by the same route, reaching the city before the first snowfall.

The question has often been asked: "How are tramps made?" It is doubtless true that a certain percentage of men is born with a hatred for honest employment which no system of education can eradicate. Such creatures are the natural vagabonds, the ulcer on the body politic which has defied treatment ever since society was established. And there is no doubt in the mind of the sociologist that they will continue to exist as long as mankind has to struggle for existence. But the majority of our latter-day tramps are creatures of circumstances.

There was a time in the history of the United States when a genuine tramp was a rarity. That was when employment was plentiful and the demand for labor did not exceed the supply.

After the close of the civil war the modern tramp, the Ishmaelite of our fin-de-siecle civilization, made his appearance in small numbers, but not until 1873, when the great panic paralyzed every American industry, did he throng our highways and byways. No human being, not born into vagabondage, drops from respectability into a state of savage freedom without passing through intermediate stages. A few facts gathered from time to time by the writer lend substance to the statement that nine-tenths of the miserable wretches who now live in idleness, and often by crime, started upon their career as tramps while honest workingmen.

Through no fault of theirs they had lost employment in the towns where they had worked for years. Several of those interviewed—and their statements were afterward corroborated—had made part payments on homes and others owned lots and household goods. When the factories which had given them work closed their doors, these men took what money they could spare and traveled to other points to earn a livelihood. They found the same unfortunate conditions prevailing wherever they went. Their funds gave out; they could no longer pay railroad fare; they had to rely upon the charitable for food and lodging; their once neat clothing had become shabby and threadbare. Onward and onward they went, like the Wandering Jew; from the lodging in a hay loft to a cot in the calaboose, and the stone pile. Honest and honorable, every hand was raised against them until they, in turn, raised their hands against everybody.

The transition from respectability to trampdom was a rapid process. It re-

A WINTER RETREAT.

quired years to accomplish it. But, once accomplished, it took hold of body and soul, and neither reformatory nor prison could eradicate it. The once respected mechanic, owing principally to their intelligence, became the leaders of bands of predatory wanderers and the founders of a class of society which is destined to thrive for many years to come.

The depression of 1873 was succeeded by a few fat years, but the industrial condition never recovered to that point which denotes universal prosperity. Each era of overproduction gave birth to new evils; and the ranks of trampdom, augmented by foreign recruits, have been gaining rather than losing in strength.

Hence, to a certain extent, every tramp encampment on the prarie of the middle west is a constant reminder of the mistakes of our system of political economy, as interpreted by professional politicians. While the tramp, as an individual or a class, is a nuisance, his existence should teach a great lesson. The foremost thinkers of America are unanimous in pronouncing him a creature of the nuisance of power and wealth; and this estimate is no doubt correct when applied to all but natural vagabonds.

The evil resulting from the increase in the number of homeless and degraded waifs is felt mostly in cities like Chicago and New York, where they are used for political purposes. Many municipal elections in the western metropolis have been carried by the cheap lodging house vote which is cast exclusively by individuals degraded by years of lawless living. They are bought up for a song by ward politicians, and thus frequently help to perpetrate rottenness in the administration of the city's affairs, without, of course, contributing anything towards its revenues.

Nevertheless, before pronouncing judgment on the human wreck that applies at your door for assistance—and at times takes by force what is not given quickly—it is well to ponder the conditions which have reduced him to his sad condition. The blear-eyed, dirty-faced mendicant may at one time have been the husband of a good woman; may have been the father of a family as promising as your own. Before casting a stone it would be wise to consider what we might be had we been in his place.

G. W. WEIPPIERT.

How It Happened.

Mr. Wickwire—I saw a woman pass a big mirror in a show window to-day without looking in.

Mrs. Wickwire—I suppose you are going to be funny now, and tell me that she was blind.

"Nope. She was looking across the street at another woman with a new hat."—Indianapolis Journal.

THEY WILL VOTE FOR M'KINLEY.

Old-Time Democrats Who Repudiate Bryan and Silver.

Toledo, O.—The majority of the leading democrats of this congressional district repudiate both platform and nominees of the Chicago convention, and many of them come out openly for McKinley. Among the most prominent may be named the following:

W. J. Colburn, delegate to the national democratic convention four years ago: "I shall vote for McKinley."

Henry W. Ashley, general manager Ann Arbor railway, a lifelong democrat: "I shall cast my vote for McKinley and Hobart and sound money."

L. Franc, for 40 years a democrat, comes out for McKinley. Also there may be named among those who express themselves against the platform, and nearly all in favor of the republican ticket:

H. Reeve Kelsey, large merchant and for 30 years a democrat; Col. S. C. Reynolds, president First national bank; Judge Harvey Scribner, E. W. Tolerton, G. Bloch, of Stern & Bloch, wholesale merchants; Dr. E. D. Scheble, Clarence Armstrong, wholesale grocer; J. L. Yost, bicycle manufacturer; F. J. Reynolds, commission dealer; Cyrus Kirley, attorney at law; W. S. Brainerd, Judge Gilbert Harmon, T. W. Childs, wholesale shoe dealer; H. J. Sprague, president Massilon Bridge company, George W. Davis, president Second national bank.

These and hundreds of other democrats absolutely repudiate both platform and nominees.

Pittsburgh, Pa.—James W. Patterson, gas inspector of Allegheny county, and one of the most prominent democrats in western Pennsylvania, joined the bolters and declared himself against Bryan and silver. He said:

"I am done with the democratic party forever. I will not go half way, but will vote the republican ticket straight, from president down to the lowest local office. I think it is time for the people of this country to throw aside party affiliation and come out and take a bold stand for the country's welfare."

J. J. Brooks, counsel for the Pennsylvania company, came home from Chicago. He says he will resign as an elector, and will vote for McKinley. He does not like McKinley, but says this is not a time for likes and dislikes. He does not favor a third ticket, but wants to fight out on McKinley or nothing.

Frederick Gwimmer, one of the largest contracts of Allegheny county, and a leading democratic politician, says he cannot stand the ticket, and the platform is too anarchistic for any sensible man to have anything to do with.

Attorney William A. Sipe, who represented the Twenty-fourth district in the Fifty-third congress, said his stomach will not stand the mess cooked up at Chicago, and he will vote for McKinley.

Jacob S. Coxey, who will go to the populist convention, says he doesn't think that Bryan and Sewall will be indorsed at St. Louis.—Chicago Inter Ocean.

M'KINLEY'S CREED.

The Republican Nominee Makes Plain His Intentions in the Campaign.

The verdict of the republican leader upon the action of the Chicago convention was not long delayed. An opportunity was afforded him to express his views, and he very properly improved it. In welcoming a Foraker club of Cleveland Maj. McKinley spoke with great earnestness of the responsibility imposed upon the patriotic people of the country by "recent events," a responsibility greater than the civil war. Then the struggle was to preserve the national government, while to-day it is a contest to preserve its honor and credit. Because of this difference men of all sections can unite to fight and prevent the repudiation of national obligations and the debasement of the currency.

Proceeding to analyze the situation, Mr. McKinley pointed out that the real difficulty is not a lack of capital, but a lack of confidence. The employment of the idle money in the vaults of American and English banks would put every man in the country at work at remunerative wages, and nothing stands in the way of a great business revival except the threat to discard the gold standard. Distrust hangs over the industrial situation, and nothing will remove it so long as there is danger of repudiation and currency debasement. "What we want," said the sound-money candidate, "is a safe policy, financial and industrial, which will give courage and confidence to all, for when that is done the money now unemployed because of fear for the future and lack of confidence will quickly appear in the channels of trade."

Finally Mr. McKinley gave the briefest and best statement of the platform upon which he stands. "Our creed embraces an honest dollar, an untarnished national credit, adequate revenue for the uses of the government, protection to labor and industry, preservation of the home market and reciprocity which will extend our foreign markets."

Here is the keynote of the coming campaign. There is no longer any doubt as to where the republican candidates stand, and the long and growing list of bolting newspapers which are joining the McKinley column attests the soundness of the republican position. It is highly significant that so few gold democratic newspapers urge the holding of a second democratic convention. In their eagerness to repudiate the silver-populist platform they prefer to throw their support on the side of the gold candidate already in the field.—Chicago Post.

Tired of the Burden.

The people of this country, irrespective of politics, have tired of the present democratic administration. The workingmen are tired of it because of its tariff policy, which has injured industry, harassed trade, reduced wages, and thrown tens of thousands of them out of steady work. The taxpayers are tired of it because it has been adding to the burden of debt through its bond issues. The farmers are tired of it because they feel the burden of the democratic hard times keenly. And there are shoals of voters tired of it because it has demonstrated that the promises made during the campaign of 1892 were glittering sophistries, which could not stand the test of experiment. They look back and recall that, under the Harrison administration, the country was prosperous. Work was plenty; wages were high; the national debt was reduced many millions. Then Cleveland came in and forthwith money was tied up; work became scarce; wages dropped and the national debt was increased many millions. No wonder they desire a change. They realize the error into which they fell in 1892, in listening to the voice of the democratic siren, and they are eager to vote for McKinley and prosperity.—Toledo Blade.

THE BOY ORATOR ON THE BURNING DECK.

"The Flame That Lit the Battle's Wreck Shone Round Him O'er the Dead.'

CURRENT COMMENT.

☞The democratic party at Chicago in this year of our Lord 1896 has simply committed suicide.—Minneapolis Tribune.

☞Cleveland requested to be made "a private in the ranks," and unanimous consent was given. — Chicago Inter Ocean.

☞That McKinley will carry California by a larger majority than any candidate has done in the past is a foregone conclusion.—Los Angeles Times.

☞The democratic party is the party of economy in the sense that it is more parsimonious in the use of truth and honesty than any other political organization that has ever existed.—St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

☞If Mr. Bryan had not found a national convention a vacuum and filled it by the combined power of lungs and sophistry he would not have been nominated for president of the United States. Had he not been nominated the speech would never have been heard of again. No nomination that was possible to the populistic democracy which controlled the Chicago convention would have been likely on sober second thought to be acceptable to the American people. Mr. Bryan's name will not make the outlook any better for his party. It means nothing that is not meant by the already generally repudiated platform on which he stands. His candidacy will not grow in public esteem. The end is inevitable. He will be defeated as surely as the November leaves will fall.—Chicago Times-Herald.

☞The outburst of semi-repudiation sentiment at Chicago and the practical alliance between democrats, populists and free silver republicans has made it too plain for anyone to mistake the fact that the issue this year is the maintenance of the credit of the nation, and that to the support of that issue the republican candidate must invite every sound money vote of the land, irrespective of party affiliations.—Pittsburgh Dispatch.

☞The solicitude entertained by the gold democrats for the honor of the nation can be appreciated when it is seen how they are hurrying to follow the only course that can make the adoption of free silver possible.—Chicago Tribune.

PROUD OF HIS RECORD.

Gen. Van Vliet, Oldest Living Officer in the Army.

During the Closing Year of the War He Spent Many Millions of Dollars Without Losing One Cent.

[Special Washington Letter.]

One of the most familiar figures on the streets of the national capital is that of Maj. Gen. Stewart Van Vliet, retired. He is short and stout, growing very stout, and his beard and hair have long been silvered by the touch of time. Although the oldest living officer in the army, he is sturdy, strong and intellectually vigorous. Moreover, he is one of the most entertaining conversationalists in our social life.

As the general entered Chamberlain's club one evening recently, an army officer remarked: "There goes a man who spent more money during the last three years of the civil war than any other man connected with the government. He disbursed fabulous sums, and yet made no mistakes." This remark was peated to Gen. Van Vliet, with the inquiry: "How much money did you disburse, all told?"

"That would be hard to say," responded the veteran. "I never thought that it would be neither interesting or necessary to foot up a grand total. It was more than $100,000,000, and probably $200,000,000. It certainly was a big pile of money, come to think of it."

"How was it expended?"

"Well, you see I had been chief quartermaster of the Army of the Potomac, and Gen. Ingalls succeeded me There was considerable money disbursed by me in that office; but when I went to New York city and was given entire charge of all transportation on the Atlantic coast east of the Allegheny mountains, I had a big job, and it took more money than I had ever dreamed of handling to properly carry on the business of my department. I not only had to look after ocean transportation, but all railway transportation of troops, ordnance material, quartermasters' stores and clothing, and all the supplies for the commissaries. I was obliged to make provision for every change of base and every expedittion of the armies of the east; and they were always on the move."

"Did you have authority over the lines of transportation?"

"Certainly. I virtually controlled every railroad line east of the Alleghenies, and I controlled all of the shipping on the Atlantic coast, excepting the regular transatlantic steamer lines. It was in my power and discretion to take possession of every ocean-going craft, no matter how large or how small. All I had to do was to take possession in the name of the government, and the ship owners could but submit. Of course, when their business was injured, it was the duty of the government to indemnify them."

"Did you use many vessels?"

"Did I? Well I should say so. I had regular trip steamers. I had lines of ocean-going vessels making regular trips to the blockading squadrons, to all the fleets, and all of the naval and military stations along the coast. These vessels were organized and made regular trips to the various stations, as far as New Orleans, and each one had a specific duty to perform. I had 200 or 300 vessels thus regularly engaged on the ocean; but in addition to those boats I had hundreds and hundreds of steamers of all sorts on the rivers, sounds, bays and inland waterways. These were transports, dispatch boats, freight and supply boats some of them among the fastest craft afloat, and others under sail and under tow."

"How many ships were under your command?"

"Bless me if I know exactly; but there were more than 20,000 of them; more than were commanded by all the admirals in the world in times of war or in times of peace. The sailing vessels

ONE OF THE MANY.

were of every description. No old sailor could name any class of boat but what it could be found in one of my fleets, somewhere, and doing some specific business for the government. The sailing vessels and steamboats named in the dictionary were all represented in my colossal navy; and it took considerable energy and push to keep track of all of them, and to keep them all in line of active duty. But I was a generation younger then than I am now, and it never tired or worried me to keep things moving."

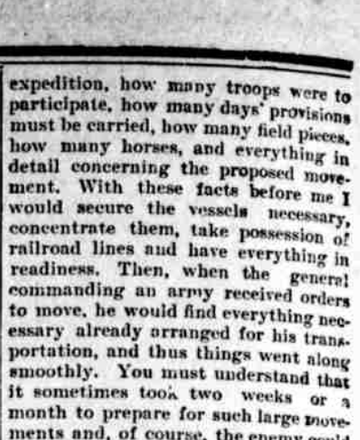
The old man lighted a fresh cigar, one of the kind the naval officers bring into this country without paying duty on them, and he continued: "The tugboats were as thick as flies on a dead army mule. There were tugs in the rivers, tugs in the bays, tugs on the sound and tugs far out at sea. To a large extent those tugs constituted the tug of war; for some of them tugged large war ships into position."

"How did you arrange for big expeditions?"

"I sometimes knew the facts concerning proposed expeditions before the commanding officers knew that they were to be ordered hither and yon. I was always privately notified by the war department concerning a proposed expedition, how many troops were to participate, how many days' provisions must be carried, how many field pieces, how many horses, and everything in detail concerning the proposed movement. With these facts before me I would secure the vessels necessary, concentrate them, take possession of railroad lines and have everything in readiness. Then, when the general commanding an army received orders to move, he would find everything necessary already arranged for his transportation, and thus things went along smoothly. You must understand that it sometimes took two weeks or a month to prepare for such large movements and, of course, the enemy could not make preparations to meet such emergencies without ample time for concentration.

"Did vessel owners or railroads offer obstacles to your movements?"

"Never to my recollection. Occasionally a small shipowner would object, but it was useless. The large shipowners were always very glad to receive employment by the government, because they received liberal compensation and prompt payment. But in those days, when the military power of the federal government was everywhere displayed, it would have been foolish for any steamer or railroad



BOARDING ONE OF THE FLEET.

manager to offer obstacles to the movements of the armies. It would have been somewhat hazardous, for men were frequently convicted of disloyalty and sent to prison on slight provocation. When the life of the nation was at hazard, we gave little thought to the views or opinions of individuals. We went right ahead and did business in our own way.

"I do not now remember how many transports were employed in carrying the expedition of Gen. Banks around to New Orleans, but it was a big job. There were naval vessels accompanying the expedition to protect the transports; but, of course, I had no control of any naval vessels. The transports carried all of the troops in Banks' expedition, all of the horses, cattle, batteries, hard tack and other food, and it cost lots of money. I don't remember anything about the total amount, but it was immense.

"Then there were two expeditions against Fort Fisher; one under Gen. Butler, and the other under Gen. Terry. I moved the Eleventh and Twelfth corps from Virginia to Tennessee. I sent the Ninth corps to the relief of Knoxville. I floated Schofield's Twenty-third corps over into North Carolina. In some of those movements, and they were in a hurry, I had to grab cars and boats wherever I could find them. Then when my cars went west loaded with troops I had to chase after them with my most vigorous assistants, in order to get them back for future movements Oh, if we didn't work in those days, no fellows ever worked. The men in the field never knew how it happened that things went so smoothly. When Gen. Sherman reached Savannah he found my fleets outside awaiting him with mails, provisions and ammunition. The old man complimented me very highly afterwards, and said that he did not expect to get any assistance for a week or ten days after reaching his destination. But there was my fleet; and wherever a regiment, brigade, division or army corps was to be moved I had the transportation ready at the time and place designated in general orders from the headquarters of the army.

"I have signed many a check for $100,000 to $500,000, and handed it over to my assistants to disburse in accordance with specific orders previously written by me. During the last year of the war I signed checks for $1,000,000. And how much do you suppose I lost during those busy and trying years of civil war? I settled my accounts with the government without having a single cent missing or unaccounted for. That is what I am most proud of in my military career. Of course it was a great commission, a responsible position, and any man might feel proud of having been placed in such supreme command. But the system of business was such that not a cent was lost in the disbursements of all those millions; and that is certainly something that a man may be proud of, and may even be excused for bragging about."

"While I was chief quartermaster of the army of the Potomac I signed all requisitions 'By order of Maj. Gen. McClellan,' and thus the general commanding the army was responsible for everything done by me. Several years after the war was over, Gen. McClellan wrote me from Orange, N. J., saying that the treasury department demanded $60 from him, on account of a disbursement which was not strictly in accordanme with the army regulations. I looked the matter up, found that under strict constructions of the regulations the order was not proper. No one but a namby-pamby would have found fault with the disbursement. No soldier would have objected to it. But inasmuch as the critical clerk in the treasury objected to that small amount I sent Gen. McClellan my check for $60, and let the matter go without taking the trouble to go to the treasury department and explain the matter. I don't often talk about war times, but you fellows have made me loquacious because you are such good listeners."

SMITH D. FRY.